Safer Communities

Transport Services

School Transport: Information Leaflet

PRIVILEGED SEAT TRANSPORT SERVICE.

Privileged Seat – School Transport Service

East Ayrshire Council's School Transport policy provides the opportunity, where available, for children to access **privileged seats** for school transport. Where there is spare capacity on existing school transport contracts, the Council will offer these vacant seats to pupils under the **privileged seat** service**.**

This service is for pupils who:

- Do not qualify for free school transport
- Do not qualify for subsidised transport to secondary school
- Are able to make arrangements to get to a pick up route of existing free school transport

Privileged seats may not be available until September each year and are only available if there are vacant seats on existing transport routes. Free school transport is not available in all schools due to the geography of many catchment areas and therefore any enquiries on availability of the privileged seats should be made to the Transport section.

The service is subsidised by East Ayrshire Council, and families will retain their seat by a contribution of a membership fee at a fixed cost for the academic year, based on the number of days the seat is available that academic year.

As these seats are dependent on the number of children entitled to free transport there may be occasions where a privilege seat will need to be given up during the term. A minimum of two weeks notice will be given and payment will be due for the days transport was available only.

Application Process

How to Apply: For transport from August 2020 if you wish to apply for a **privileged seat** you need to complete an East Ayrshire School Online Transport Application Form which is available on East Ayrshire Council's website.

Once this has been submitted online you will receive a confirmation e-mail which will give you a unique application reference number for your application.

The following must also be included with an application or provided as soon as possible after the application via the postbox option on your confirmation e-mail

- A passport style photograph *(to allow membership ID cards to be issued)*
- Any documents relevant to your application

If you have any issues completing this form online please contact your school in the first instance or e-mail school-transport@east-transport.gov.uk. Your application will be checked and you will receive confirmation via e-mail that transport has been approved. If your application is declined reasons will be given in the e-mail which you have the right to appeal the decision

When to Apply: Application for membership of the **privileged seat** service must be submitted on an annual basis as membership only covers one academic year. All applications should be submitted as early as possible and before the 30 June to have the best opportunity to access a seat.

What Happens After I Apply: You will be notified in writing of the outcome of your application prior to the end of September. Your application will be placed on hold due to limited capacity on the existing contracts you will be advised via e-mail. You will have to make your own arrangements to get your child to school for the start of term until places can be allocated.

Taking up a Privileged Seat

If your application is successful the School Transport Section will:

- The Transport Section will notify SPT of the children entitled to free school transport and local arrangements will be made direct via the transport provider. Any queries regarding pick up locations and times can be clarified by contacting the provider or SPT. For the new term in August this will not available until July.
- Issue a photo ID membership card which will be used as a bus pass for the assigned school contract bus or scheduled service bus
- Arrange for an invoice to be issued *(where applicable)*
- Your membership card is your only evidence of your membership and without it you may be asked to pay an additional fare or be denied access to transport. If your card is lost or stolen you must notify the transport section as soon as possible and replacement cards will be issued at an additional cost.

Transport will be provided under the **privileged seat** service utilising the existing transport provision for free school transport including school buses, mini buses, taxi and private hire vehicles. Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) arranges and monitors contracts for the transport of primary and secondary pupils on behalf of East Ayrshire Council.

Allocation of Privileged Seats

Privilege seats will normally be available from September as time is needed for SPT to identify the number of seats required for those children entitled to **free** and **subsidised** transport and subsequently the number of vacant seats available for the **privileged seat** service.
If there are more requests than privileged seats available, seats will be allocated to pupils on an annual basis using the following priority order:

1. Applications will be considered based on distance, with priority given to those children whose home address is furthest away from the school
2. Where all children from the same address or distance are unable to be allocated to a privilege seat, the youngest children will be allocated first
3. Allocations will be given to those whose home address is more than half of the Council's entitlement distance and within the school's catchment area
4. Any remaining seats will be open to application by children in the catchment area living closer than those identified in point 2 or children at the school on a Placing Request. These seats will be allocated by ballot.

Where a privilege seat requires to be allocated during the year to a new entitled child, the reverse of the above criteria will be applied in determining which child/ren will lose the privileged seat.

Payment for Privileged Seats

By accepting a privilege seat you are committing to pay a contribution for the membership of the service and pay for all the days the service is available within the academic year.

The cost of a **privileged seat** is set annually and is based on a fixed daily rate for subsidised transport. Details of the current cost of annual membership for subsidised transport services are available with this leaflet and on East Ayrshire Council's website.
Payment of the annual fee can be made by any of the Councils current payment methods or by instalments over an 8 month period.

Temporary reduction in membership due to a child's absence from school will only be considered after four weeks or in exceptional circumstances. *(It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to confirm in writing any change of circumstances and request for reduction or cancellation of membership. Supporting evidence such as confirmation of change of address or medical evidence must also be provided.)*

Unpaid fees will be pursued by the Council and will lead to the withdrawal of membership and access to the **privileged seat** service in future.

In the event that we need to withdraw a **privileged seat** we will reduce the cost accordingly and issue you with any refund due based on the days the service is available.

If you are Dissatisfied

How to Appeal: If you are unhappy about a decision regarding your child's entitlement to school transport or believe a charge has been applied incorrectly, you should write to the Contract Manager for Transport at the School Transport Section and you have the right to appeal any decision to the Head of Facilities & Property Management.

How to make a Complaint: Concerns or complaints regarding any aspect of the provision of school transport operated by the contracted provider will be dealt with by SPT. Parents/guardians should raise concerns directly with their child's school by telephone giving details that will then be recorded and submitted to SPT using a complaints postcard system.

Parents/guardians may also complain direct to SPT in writing if they feel their concerns are serious or are not addressed by the provider. Where parents/guardians have contacted SPT direct, SPT will respond direct to parents/guardians and advise the school of the outcome of their investigations.
Concerns or complaints regarding child behaviour on school transport should be raised directly with the school.

Any concerns or complaints regarding the service provided by the school transport section should be made directly to the Contract Manager for Transport at the school transport section.
Complaints can be made by telephone or in writing to the relevant person.

Contact Information

East Ayrshire Council
School Transport Section
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